

In 2006, I was contracted by the North Dakota attorney general's office to provide expert testimony on the social justification for the North Dakota corporate farming law. I updated the research conducted by my colleague, Linda Lobao, for her 2000 defense of the South Dakota corporate farming law.

Defense of these corporate farming laws often requires evidence from social science research that industrialized farming poses risks to communities. Social scientists have had a long history of concern about the effects of industrialized farming on communities. So, after we synthesized some 80 years of research on the social consequences for rural communities of industrialized farming, Lobao and I had our research published in *Agriculture and Human Values* in 2007. We evaluated studies investigating the effects of industrialized farming on community well-being from the 1930s to the present.

Using a pool of 51 peer-reviewed studies, we documented the research designs employed, evaluated results as to whether adverse consequences were found, and described the aspects of community life that may be affected by industrialized farming. Of these studies, 57 percent found largely detrimental impacts. Twenty-five percent were mixed, finding some detrimental impacts. And 18 percent found no detrimental impacts. The adverse impacts were found across an array of indicators measuring socioeconomic conditions, community social fabric and environmental conditions. Meanwhile, few positive effects of industrialized farming were found across studies. The results show that public concern about industrialized farms is warranted.

More particular to whether corporate farming laws have had any impact on rural communities, our colleagues Tom Lyson and Rick Welsh used data on 433 agriculture-dependent counties in the United States as the basis for a 2005 article in *Environment and Planning*. They found that counties in states with laws that limit nonfamily corporate entry into farming scored higher on important social welfare indicators, and that the laws mitigated negative impacts on rural communities from industrial farming.

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